

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 TRSE-00 /059 W
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R 291715Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6215
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL PALERMO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 12424

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: DC LEADERS SHELVE PROPOSAL TO POSTPONE FALL ADMIN-
ISTRATIVE ELECTIONS AND POSTPONE NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

REF: ROME 12103

SUMMARY: DC LEADERS HAVE SHELVED A CONTROVERSIAL PROPOSAL
TO POSTPONE THIS FALL'S LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS
TO THE SPRING WHICH HAD THREATENED TO DIVIDE THE PARTY ALONG
FACTIONAL AND GENERATIONAL LINES. WITH NO COMPELLING REASON
THEREAFTER TO CONVENE THIS WEEKEND'S DC NATIONAL COUNCIL,
PARTY SECRETARY ZACCAGNINI'S ACCIDENTAL INCAPACITATION (BROKEN
LEG) PROVIDED THE RATIONALE TO POSTPONE THE MEETING UNTIL AFTER
THE AUGUST HOLIDAYS. THE ELECTION POSTPONEMENT ISSUE
DEMONSTRATED THE STRENGTH OF GROWING NUMBERS IN THE DC
WHO ARE MISTRUSTFUL OF THE PROGRAM ACCORD, AND ARE
TAKING AN INCREASINGLY CONFRONTATIONAL ATTITUDE TOWARD THE
PCI. IT ALSO REPRESENTED SOMETHING OF A SETBACK FOR MORO.
WHO HAD INITIALLY PROPOSED IT. END SUMMARY.
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1. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT (DC) LEADERS AGREED LATE ON JULY
28. TO POSTPONE (PROBABLY TO SEPTEMBER) THE MEETING OF
THE NATIONAL COUNCIL WHICH HAD BEEN SCHEDULED TO BEGIN
ON THE MORNING OF JULY 30. THE DECISION WAS MOTIVATED
BY PARTY SECRETARY ZACCAGNINI'S INCAPACITATION AS A
RESULT OF A FALL EARLIER THAT DAY IN WHICH HE SUFFERED

A FRACTURED FEMUR.

2. THE NATIONAL COUNCIL HAD BEEN EXPECTED TO PROVIDE A SIGNIFICANT DEBATE OF DC POLICY AND STRATEGY VIS-A-VIS THE PCI IN THE WAKE OF THE INTERPARTY PROGRAM ACCORD. AT LAST WEEK'S PARTY DIRECTORATE MEETING, WIDESPREAD UNEASE OVER THE PROGRAM ACCORD (AND THE FEAR THAT IT MIGHT SERVE AS A PRETEXT FOR ITS APPLICABILITY ON THE LOCAL, PROVINCIAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL) WAS EVIDENT IN THE PROLONGED AND OFTEN BITTER CRITICISM OF THE PRESENT PARTY LEADERSHIP (MORO/ZACCAGNINI). LED BY FANFANI (RIGHT), "BISAGLIA" DOROTI (CENTER-RIGHT) AND DONAT-CATTIN'S FORZE NUOVISTI (LEFT), THE DISSENT FOCUSED ON A CONTROVERSIAL PROPOSAL ESPOUSED BY MORO WITH THE SUPPORT OF ANDREOTTI AND CHAMBER WHIP PICCOLI TO POSTPONE THIS NOVEMBER'S LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS TO NEXT SPRING (REFTEL).

3. THE ISSUE WAS AN IMPORTANT ONE WITH FAR-REACHING POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS. THOSE IN FAVOR OF POSTPONEMENT ARGUED THAT THE COUNTRY NEEDED A PERIOD OF POLITICAL AND GOVERNMENTAL STABILITY TO PUT THE PROGRAM ACCORD'S PROVISIONS INTO EFFECT AS WELL AS ATTENUATION OF PARTISAN POLITICS TO FACILITATE RESOLUTION OF NUMEROUS DIVISIVE ISSUES SUCH AS FAIR RENT, THE AMNESTY PROPOSAL, AND ABORTION. SINCE THE NOVEMBER ELECTIONS INVOLVED A TENTH OF THE ELECTORATE, THEY WOULD NECESSARILY
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CONSTITUTE THE KIND OF POLITICAL TEST THAT COULD RENDER DIFFICULT CONTINUED POLITICAL COOPERATION IN THE SPIRIT OF THE PROGRAM ACCORD. DC ADVOCATES OF POSTPONEMENT ALSO POINTED OUT THAT ELECTIONS IN NOVEMBER WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY DEAL THE SOCIALISTS ANOTHER HARSH BLOW, COMPLICATING AND PERHAPS EVEN THREATENING CRAXI'S CHANCES TO RETAIN LEADERSHIP OF THAT DIVIDED PARTY. FURTHER PSI LOSSES AT THE POLLS WOULD FAVOR ASCENDANCY OF CRAXI'S RIVALS ON THE PARTY'S LEFT, MAKING POLITICAL CONCILIATION BETWEEN THE PSI AND THE DC (STILL AN IMPORTANT DC OBJECTIVE) EVEN MORE REMOTE. FINALLY, DC PROPONENTS OF POSTPONEMENT ARGUED THAT THE STRENGTH OF THE ANTI-OSIMO TREATY SENTIMENT IN TRIESTE WAS SUCH THAT THE INDEPENDENT "CIVIC LIST" WOULD SEVERELY SAP DC VOTES IN ONE OF THE LAST MAJOR ITALIAN CITIES STILL IN DC HANDS (TRIESTE 210).

4. OPPONENTS OF POSTPONEMENT ARGUED THAT THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS SHOULD NOT BE TAMPERED WITH FOR POLITICAL CONVENIENCE. THE TRADITIONAL PERIOD OF DECISIONMAKING PARALYSIS PRIOR TO LOCAL ELECTIONS HAD ALREADY BEGUN; POSTPONEMENT WOULD PROLONG THIS

PARALYSIS UNTIL NEXT SPRING. MOREOVER, VOTERS SHOULD
BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS ON
THE PROGRAM ACCORD AND OTHER ISSUES. ADVOCATES OF
ELECTIONS ON SCHEDULE BELIEVE THE DC WILL DO WELL
AND THAT THE PCI WILL SUFFER REVERSES IN THE SOUTH

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AND POSSIBLY BE STEMMED ELSEWHERE. FINALLY, THE
LEAST NUANCED CRITICS OF POSTPONEMENT (DONAT-CATTIN)
OPENLY CALLED FOR ELECTIONS AS A GUARANTEE AGAINST
THE POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER DC-PCI ACCOMMODATION BY
KEEPING UP THE POLEMICAL SPIRIT OF PORTISAN POLITICS
THAT ALWAYS PRECEDES ELECTION PERIODS.

5. UNABLE TO REACH A CONCLUSION, THE DC DIRECTORATE
CALLED ON ZACCAGNINI TO EXAMINE THE ISSUE FURTHER
"IN CLOSE COORDINATION" WITH THE PARLIAMENTARY
GROUP HEADS BEFORE THE NATIONA COUNCIL SESSION.
WITHIN THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS, HOWEVER, OPPOSITION
TO POSTPONEMENT PROVED TO BE EVEN STRONGER AND MORE
VOCIFEROUS. FANFANIANI, BISAGLIA-DOROTEI, AND
FORZE NUOVISTI WERE JOINED BY MANY MEMBERS OF EVEN
ANDREOTTI'S AND MORO'S SMALL FACTIONS. THE DISSENT
AMONG THE YOUNGER DC PARLIAMENTARIANS WAS PARTICULARLY
STRONG, FORCING CHAMBER WHIP PICCOLI TO STATE THAT
HE HAD ARGUED FOR POSTPONEMENT AT THE DIRECTORATE ON
A PERSONAL BASIS AND NOT AS RPERSENTATIVE OF THE GROUP.

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SEVERLA DC LEADERS (MORO, ZACCAGNINI, PICCOLI),
OBVIOUSLY CONCERNED WITH THE DEPTH OF THE OPPOSITION,
SOUGHT TO DISPEL FEARS OVER THE ISSUE AND PRESERVE
PARTY UNITY IN A NUMBER OF PUBLIC ADDRESSES.

6. BY WEEK'S END, IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE LEADERSHIP'
POSTPONEMENT PROPOSAL WOULD NOT PREVAIL AND THREATENED
TO DIVIDE THE PARTY SHARPLY ON BOTH FACTIONAL AND
GENERATIONAL LINES. AFTER CONCEDED THAT THE PROPOSAL
WOULD NOT BE ADVANCED, THERE WAS NO LONGER ANY
COMPELLING REASON TO CONVENE THE NATIONAL COUNCIL.
ZACCAGNINI'S ACCIDENT MADE IT EASIER FOR MORO TO
OBTAIN PARTY LEADERS' CONCURRENCE IN POSTPONEMENT
OF THE SESSION.

7. COMMENT: THE CONTROVERSY DEMONSTRATED THE
STRENGTH OF GROWING NUMBERS IN THE DC, PARTICULARLY
IN PARLIAMENT, WHO ARE MISTRUSTFUL OVER THE IMPLICA-
TIONS OF THE PROGRAM ACCORD AND HAVE TAKEN AN IN-
CREASINGLY CONFRONTATIONAL LINE TOWARD THE PCI.
IT ALSO SHOWED THAT MORO, THE ARCHITECT OF
THE DC'S STRATEGY THROUGHOUT THE ARDUOUS, FOUR MONTH
LONG NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE PROGRAM ACCORD, IS NO
LONGER IMMUNE FROM ATTACK. THE DC TRADITIONALLY
DOES NOT ALLOW ANY ONE LEADER TO REMAIN ON A PEDESTAL
FOR LONG. ALTHOUGH STILL CLEARLY IN COMMAND OF
THE PARTY'S DIRECTION, MORO NO LONGER IS REGARDED
AS THE PERSONIFICATION OF THE DC, AND HE HAS LOST
MUCH OF THE AURA HE ACQUIRED IN HIS RINGING DEFENSE
OF THE PARTY DURING LAST SPRING'S LOCKHEED DEBATES.
NOW THAT COMPLETION OF THE PROGRAM NEGOTIATIONS
HAS LESSENED THE EXIGENCIES FOR PARTY UNITY, MORE
FACTIONAL MANEUVERING CAN BE EXPECTED BETWEEN RIVAL
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DC LEADERS IN PREPARATION FOR RESUMPTION OF FULL
POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN THE FALL. GARDNER

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Message Attributes

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